



Paradox  
*Truth that Breaks the Rules*

**A Purpose and a Promise**  
2 Corinthians 12:7-10

This Fall we'll be looking at paradoxes that Jesus proclaims—statements that seem absurd or self-contradicting, but when investigated prove to be true. Our pastors will try their best to make clear the complicated paradoxes, and we'll be able to answer our questions and process through them in small groups!

**SERMON SUMMARY**

<sup>7</sup>So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.<sup>10</sup>For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

**Key Issue:**

What do I **do** when there is **nothing** left to do?

- When we've failed again, sinned again, God has said 'no' to us again, where do we turn to? Where do we go in our weakness?
- Paul's "thorn" (weakness) was painful, inconvenient, persistent/constant, and permanent (12:7). And yet, Paul says that he boasts in his weakness (11:30, 12:9)

**Clarifying the Paradox:**

Embracing your **inability** is a prerequisite to experiencing Christ's **ability**.

- In Paul's weakness (inability), God's power (ability) is brought to completion.
- Paul says he is content in his weaknesses (12:10). Weakness isn't something to be escaped or endured, but embraced, to be stepped into. When I am weak, then I am strong.
- What if all the weaknesses we live with every day are not interruptions in a good life, but invitations from God to a new reality?
- God tells Paul that His grace is "sufficient", meaning he doesn't need anything more (12:9).
- Paul says that his thorn was "given" to him. "Given" in the Greek infers getting a positive type of gift.

**A Purpose and A Promise:****Purpose:** Weakness creates **humility**.**Promise:** He who is mighty to save is mighty to **sustain**.

- Pride makes us toxic to others, to ourselves, and to the presence of God in our lives.
- When we're confronted with our weakness, we can puff ourselves up in pride or bow in humility.
- God's grace saves us, but also sustains us through the rest of our lives, through our weakness, our sin, our guilt and shame.

**Embrace Weakness:**

1. I don't need to act **strong**.
2. I don't need all the **answers**.
3. I do need **Jesus**.

**DISCUSSION****Reminders for small group leaders:**

- We want everyone to interact with God's Word. Please have Bibles available for students who don't have one. We have a limited amount of Bibles available at church, so remind your people to bring theirs if they have one. **Be sure to open up your Bibles together during small group!**
- Set aside a time to **pray** for each other during every POD. Try not to rush through this time as it's good to have people pray for each other.
- Regularly **recap** how your POD is doing with your co-leaders. Are you meeting your goals? How can you help your people grow in relationship with God and with each other?
- The teaching happened on Sunday at church. **The purpose of small groups is to ask two questions:** 1) *What is God saying to me in His Word?*, 2) *What is He asking me to do in response?* Your role is to help everyone answer these two questions so that God can do His work of transforming hearts and lives.

**RECAP with your co-leader/REFLECT by yourself**

- *What stood out to you/encouraged you/challenged you, etc from the message?*
- *What is the learning point and/or action point you want the people in your small group to leave with?*
- *How would you summarize the sermon in one or two sentences?*

**QUESTIONS****Getting to know you**

- How do you respond when you feel weak? (ex. cover up your weaknesses, puff yourself up in pride, try to do better, etc)
- Is it easy or difficult for you to admit or to share about your weakness? Why?

- How did your parents deal with weakness (either with your weakness or with their own)? If they expressed their weakness, how did they express it?

### **Into the Bible/Application**

- **Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.**
  - **Look at verse 7.**
    - How do weaknesses create humility in our lives? Is there a time in your life when you saw this happen?
    - Paul says that God gave him his thorn as if he was given a good gift. How can Paul call his thorn a positive “gift” to receive?
  - **Look at verse 9.**
    - Have you experienced God’s “sufficient” grace in a time of weakness? Explain.
  - **Look at verse 10.**
    - What does it look like to “be content” in our weaknesses?
  - How would you explain verses 9 and 10 to someone in your own words?
- Can you think of a time when Jesus was weak?
  - **Read Philippians 2:7-9, 2 Corinthians 13:4, or crucifixion & resurrection passages.** How was God’s sufficient grace and power demonstrated through Jesus’ weakness?
- **Read 2 Corinthians 2:1-5.** In this passage Paul says that he explained the Gospel to the Corinthians in weakness so that their faith would not rest on his wisdom, but on God’s power. Have you seen God’s power demonstrated in your weakness? Explain.
- Do you have a group of trusted friends that you can share your weakness with so you can encourage each other to depend on Jesus? If you don’t, look for these people

### **PRAY**

Pray that you’d embrace your inability with humility, and believe the promise that God’s grace is sufficient and all you need

Pray that you’d be able to be vulnerable in a community that pushes each other to embrace weaknesses and depend on Jesus’ strength and power

Pray against the need to appear strong for others (pride), but to be content with being weak so that Jesus’ power is made evident in your life

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### ***College students***

**Epic this Thursday** will be at MU13 at 7:30pm. We’ll continue our series on *Misconceptions of Christianity*.

Sign up for **Fall Retreat** at [osuepic.com](http://osuepic.com) before October 12 for the early bird prices (\$30 for freshmen/transfers, \$60 for everyone else). If you sign up on October 12 or after, you’ll pay \$70. Fall Retreat will be at Camp Lutherwood; rides will be provided.

September 30, 2018

Week 2/5

***Men***

A men's **camping trip** will be October 19-21 in Astoria. Cost is \$40. If you would like to attend, please email our church office at [andrea@grantavebc.org](mailto:andrea@grantavebc.org).

***All church***

If you want to receive the **weekly email newsletter with church announcements/news**, visit <http://www.grantavebc.org/news--events.html> to sign up!